9: d'Azevedo et al. E-4,5 (1952-1961) 1963 NT20 Washo NT20

WASHO RESPONSE TO ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

by James F. Downs

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In this paper I will discuss Washo response, or more properly, lack of response, to a single aspect of white culture, animal husbandry. The data herein presented were gathered in 1959 as a continuing study of the impact of animal husbandry on human culture and society in which the Washo serve as a negative but nonetheless important example. The Washo were selected because reference to the literature and discussions with W. L. d'Azevedo suggested that the Washo response to the introduction of livestock was very different from what has come to be accepted as usual in the western part of the North America. This response appeared even more notable when compared to the reaction of the nearby Paiute and Shoshoni groups, which served as a basis for a considerable body of theoretical speculation (Steward, 1955).

By examining a negative case I hope to demonstrate at least some of the adjustments and adaptations necessary in a society, previously without animal husbandry, before animal husbandry can be successfully incorporated. I shall not attempt to explain why the Washo failed to make such adjustments except by a general reference to the arguments outlined elsewhere, which, although they suggest a reason for a difference in response between the Washo and their neighbors, do not offer explanations for the exact course of the Washo response.

In the interests of brevity and clarity of argument I shall not attempt to reconstruct the entire process of change as it has taken place since the 1840's, but shall limit the discussion to the immediate question of animal husbandry.

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The Washo today can be viewed as a socially assimilated people. That is, the Washo have not developed institutions within their own society in response to the changes brought about by white occupancy of their territory. Law enforcement is carried out by the county officials in the counties where the Washo reside, and offenders are tried in local and state courts (although, in theory, crimes committed in the Dresslerville community should be dealt with by the Federal Government). Education for Washo children is provided by local schools in Nevada and California. Old age and blindness pensions are paid by the states involved, and, in fact, the choice of a homesite often